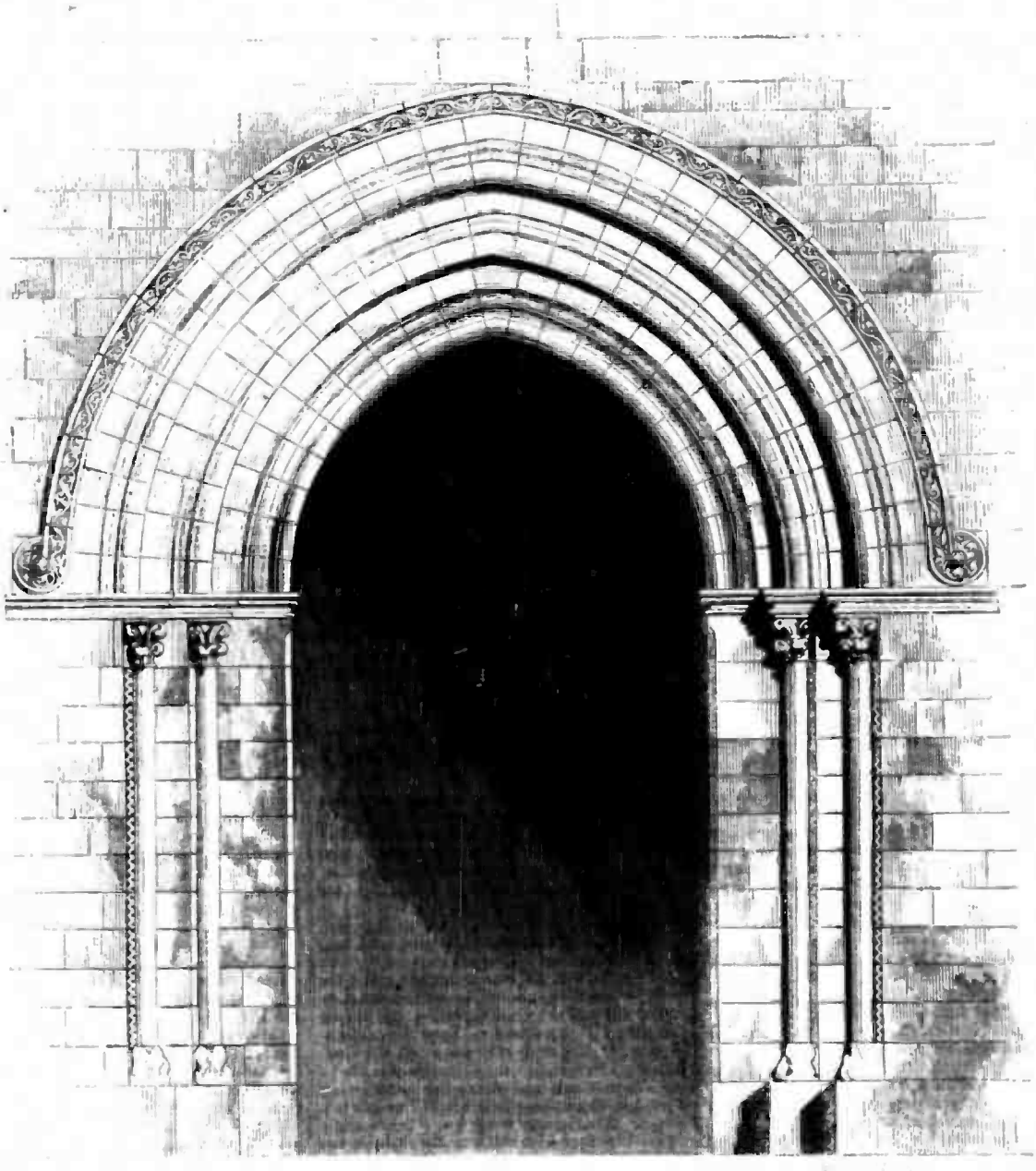
ARCHITECTURE IN SICILY:

DOORWAY AT LAGABIA, GARGENTI.



a footing in the country which they first visited as pilgrims. Their next step was to invite their kindred from Normandy. Many came; some joining the new colony, others entering the service of the Italian princes.

Maniaces, the Byzantine general, in A.D. 1025, invited the Normans to join the imperial standard on the approaching expedition against the Saracens in Sicily, whose usurpation of the island was not forgotten, nor intended to be left unavenged. The proposition was immediately accepted. The Normans at once chose for their leader William, the eldest son of Tancred de Hauteville, and enlisted under the eastern banner. William so signalized himself by his chivalrous behaviour, that he became an universal favourite. He obtained the surname of "Bras-de-fer;" and, among his numberless exploits, the transfixing with his lance the Saracenic governor of Syracuse, may not be reckoned the least important. The success of the Normans appears to have excited the jealousy of their eastern friends; and a lengthened series of commotions ensued, owing, it should seem, to the treachery of Maniaces and the suspicions of the Byzantine government; but the Normans gained strength, and in A.D. 1043 considered their superiority sufficient to permit them to venture to decide for themselves with reference to the acquisitions they made in conjunction with the eastern army. They appointed a council for the regulation of their affairs, and began to assume the appearance of formal government. The council consisted of two members, under the control of a chief magistrate, and every affair or question of consequence was brought before the superior court. Bras-de-fer was the first called to the magistracy; he took the title of Count of Apulia, and placed his capital at Melfi, in Italy.

The records of the bravery, courtesy, and religious character of the Normans, notwithstanding their predatory inclinations, in which, it must be confessed, they only imitated their neighbours, are, wherever they settled, full of the deepest interest. The valorous deeds of their chiefs, the indomitable courage of their soldiery, and the virtues of their fairer companions, seem fitter for the pages of romance than the rough and heartless annals of real history. The achievements of the noble Robert Guiscard, the generosity of King Roger and his beauteous consort Eremburga, are not the least attractive topics in Norman story. This people present the most brilliant examples of valour and devotion which are to be found in the records of those unsettled times. Europe redounded with their exploits during the crusades. But though occupied in the pursuit of conquest, they appear to be no less favourable to the cultivation of those arts which are usually considered as peculiar to peace.

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*** The annexed engraving of a doorway at Lagabia, Gargenti, will be referred to in a following portion of this paper.

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